

2. Background



South Washington Street Corridor Planning Opportunity Area 2

Location

The South Washington Street Planning Opportunity Area (POA) is located along the City's southern border and is the second priority area of eight to be studied in the City of Falls Church as part of the Comprehensive Plan update process. It is part of a major commercial corridor that stretches along Route 29 through the heart of the city, which also includes the City Center POA and North Washington Street POA. The South Washington Street POA is 43.3 acres, bordered to the south and southwest by Fairfax County. Residential neighborhoods border the area to the east, west and northwest, and the City Center POA borders the area to the north along Route 29.

The boundaries of the South Washington Street POA were initially established in chapter four of the 2005 Comprehensive Plan. It has been changed from Priority Area 6 in the 2005 Comprehensive Plan to Priority Area 2 in this update. It is being produced second due to the POA's location along the Route 29 commercial corridor, proximity to the City Center POA, and because it serves as a major gateway to the city. There has also been recent developer interest in properties along South Washington Street, and the Intermodal Transit Plaza project brings a new transit element to the area. The plan for the South Washington Street Corridor POA will supplement the previous plan made for the North Washington Street POA in framing the City Center POA along Route 29.

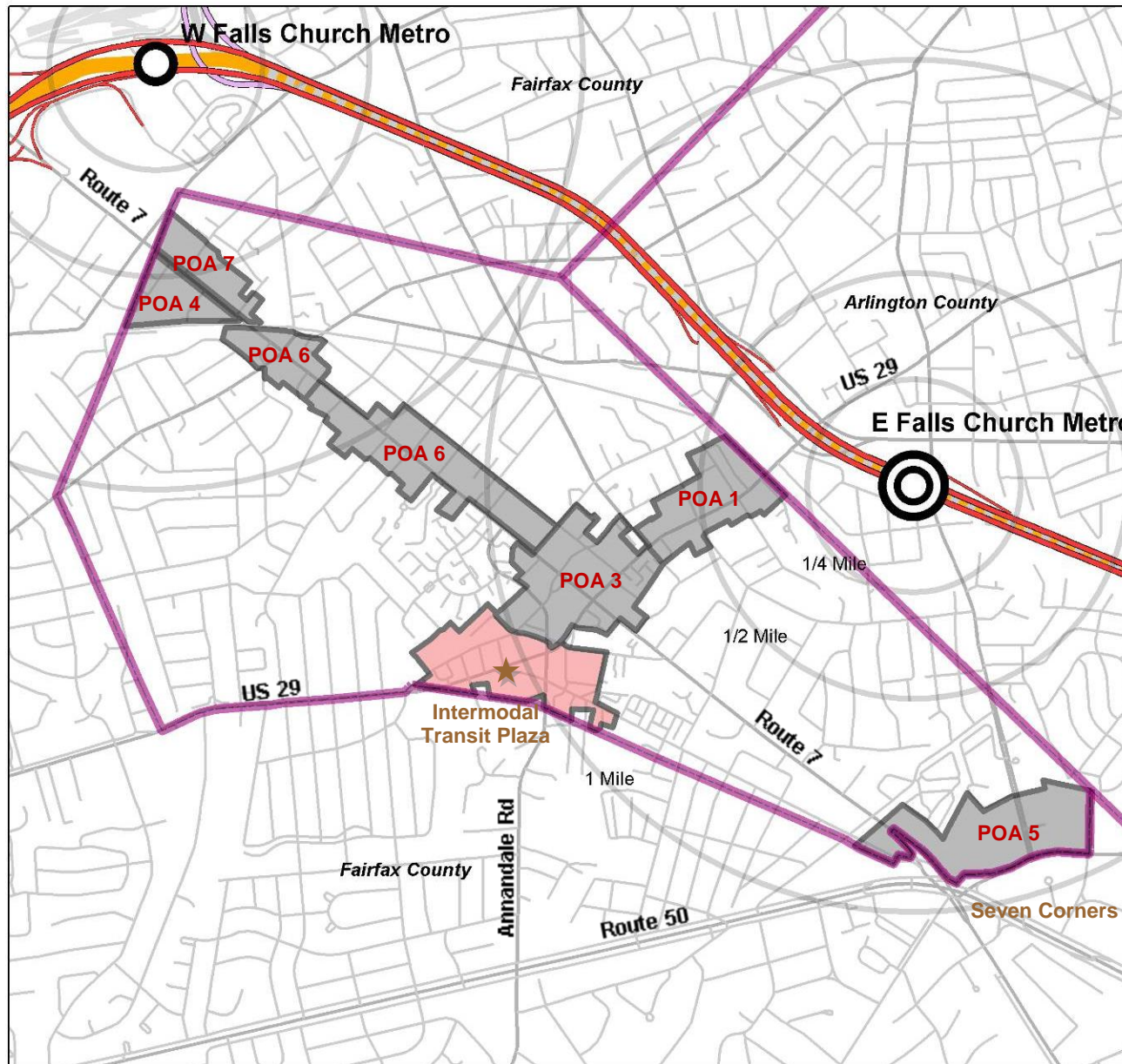
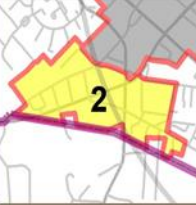
History

The City of Falls Church in general, and the South Washington Street Corridor POA in particular, boast a rich and extensive history. The following sections provide a very brief outline of the history of the POA. More information related to the history of the area is available at the Mary Riley Styles Public Library. Reservations are required to access the Local History Room. The library is located at 120 North Virginia Avenue, Falls Church, VA 22046. The Local History Room can be reached directly by phone at 703 248 5140 (TTY 711).

Early History

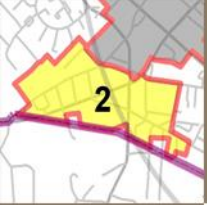
The first settlement in the area was in 1699 with a home site that is now honored in Big Chimneys Park, adjacent to the POA. The family that settled there has remained here with 13 generations continuing to live in and around the City of Falls Church. The Rolling Road, which passes through the POA, was used as a regional route for market goods including tobacco and brought many travelers through the area. William Gunnell's Church was first built of wood in 1733. By 1757, the church became known as The Falls Church due to its location on a main road from the Little Falls to the Potomac River. The church was re-built of brick in 1769 and still stands at its current location at the corner of South Washington Street and East Fairfax Street, adjacent to the POA. The Falls Church

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Location
S Washington St Corridor
Planning Opportunity Area 2
City of Falls Church
Legend City Boundary S Washington St Corridor Other Planning Opportunity Areas

Background



South Washington Street Corridor Planning Opportunity Area 2

Background



Aerial
S Washington St Corridor
Planning Opportunity Area 2
City of Falls Church
Legend
City Boundary
Planning Opportunity Area
Map Based on 2009 Aerial Imagery for City of Falls Church
0 100 200 300 400 Feet



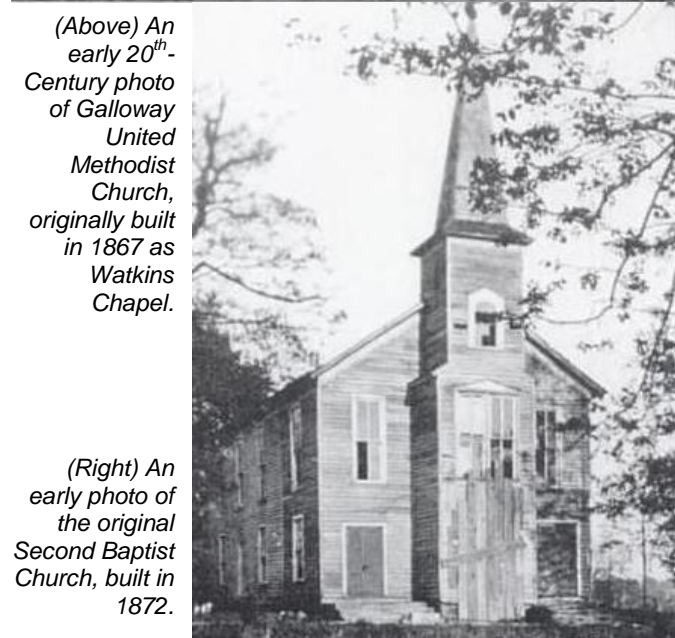
vestrymen included George Washington, George Mason, and benefactors included Lord Fairfax. The church was a central construct of the community during the colonial and Federal periods. The Falls Church became the centerpiece of a community that would develop around it and eventually become the City of Falls Church.

19th Century

During the Civil War, The Falls Church was actively used to support the troops on both sides in response to the nearby battles. The church was at times used for a field hospital and the church cemetery includes graves of both Confederate and Union troops. Shortly after the end of the Civil War and the 13th Amendment was passed in 1865, the Tinner brothers began searching for land to buy. In 1867, African Americans John and Charles Tinner purchased property in Falls Church from the Dulany family, prominent local landowners. The Lee brothers, James and Charles, also purchased land in the area in 1867. That same year, Watkins Chapel, later known as Galloway United Methodist Church, was constructed for freed slaves on land procured by George and Harriet Brice. Charles Tinner would become an active member of the Galloway Church congregation after joining in 1871. Black children went to school in the nearby Second Baptist Church, built on Baptist Hill in modern-day Fairfax County in 1872. The school was called “The Colored School,” and classes were held in the basement of the church.



(Above) An early 20th-Century photo of Galloway United Methodist Church, originally built in 1867 as Watkins Chapel.

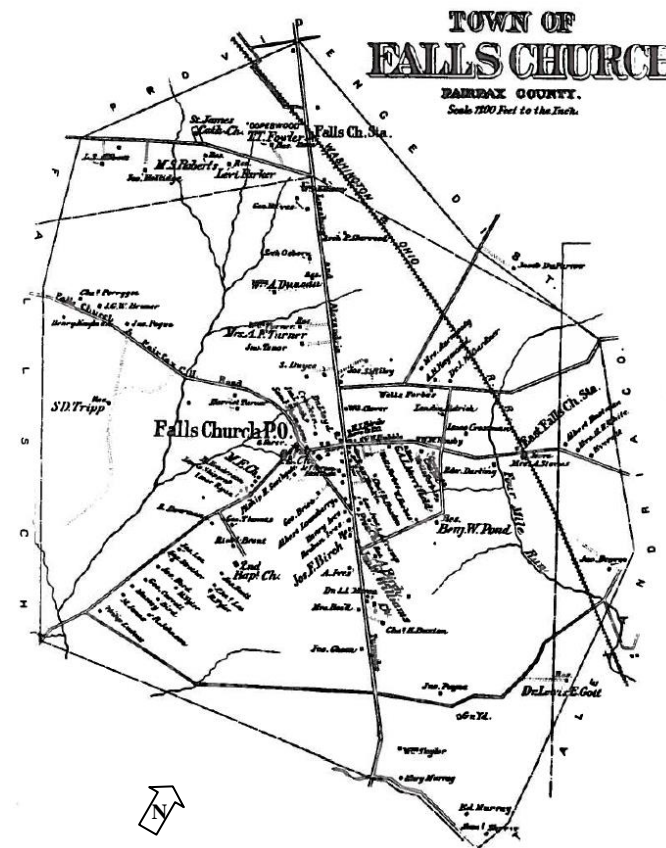


(Right) An early photo of the original Second Baptist Church, built in 1872.

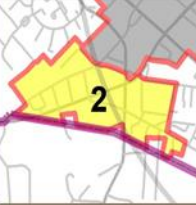
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In 1875, Falls Church became a township within Fairfax County, gained a new level of autonomy, and began management of some essential community functions. Upon gaining township the town boundary included the entire Tinner Hill neighborhood, as well as a large area in what is now Fairfax County. This added population meant that 37 percent of registered voters at the time were Black. In 1887, the town government moved the boundary line northward to exclude much of the Tinner Hill neighborhood from Falls Church. This reduced the number of Black registered voters to 15 percent of the total in the township. Also in 1887, Dr. Edwin Bancroft (E. B.) Henderson's grandmother, Eliza Henderson, bought land in Falls Church.

In 1890, the Town Council of Falls Church voted to cede its other majority African-American districts to Fairfax County. As a result, over one-third of the land that made up the town was retroceded to the County. The vote was made over concerns that the African-American population would become large enough to influence local elections at the polls. The South Washington Street Corridor POA lies adjacent to a portion of the resultant boundary, with gateways from Fairfax County at entrances to the City along South Annandale Road and South Washington Street (Route 29, formerly Lee Highway).



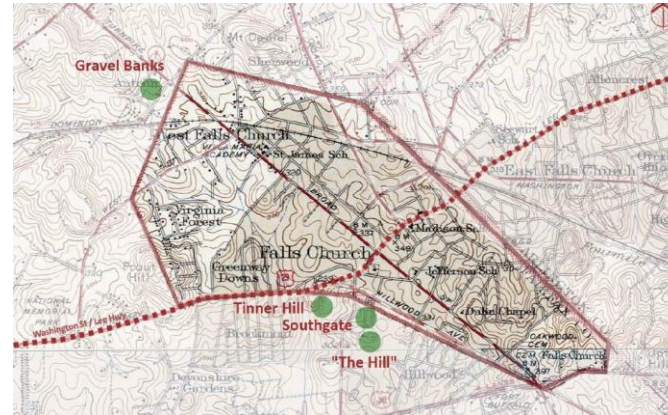
1878 map of the Town of Falls Church.



Early 20th Century

In 1902, Washington Post political cartoonist Clifford Berryman published his Teddy Bear cartoon, depicting then President Teddy Roosevelt on a hunting trip with the bear he would not shoot. Mr. Berryman, whose home was on South Maple Avenue near Gibson Street, became world famous as the Teddy Bear quickly became an international sensation. A statewide law was passed in 1912 that would allow localities to enact their own racial segregation ordinances. Shortly after, in 1914, the Falls Church Town Council decided to begin the approval process on such an ordinance. An initial ordinance that would have barred the sale or rental of land or dwellings to African-Americans within certain areas of the Town failed 2-3 when it came up for a vote in Council. That same year, a new ordinance based on the state enabling legislation that permitted the creation of segregated districts was then proposed.

In January 1915, the Falls Church Town Council was ready to pass the ordinance. In response, Dr. E. B. Henderson and Joseph Tinner created the Colored Citizens Protective League (CCPL). Though the ordinance did pass and segregation boundaries were formally drawn, the CCPL was successful in that the ordinance was never fully enforced. In addition, after a two year legal campaign, in 1917 the CCPL was successful in getting the ordinance nullified by the Supreme Court of Virginia. A year later, in 1918, the CCPL



Map showing current boundaries and African-American communities that had been retroceded to Fairfax County by 1890.

(Map from "Tinner Hill, VA: A Witness to Civil Rights," Virginia Tech, July 2011)

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evolved into the first rural branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). In 1920, Dr. E. B. Henderson began an historic campaign against racial discrimination that would see him write nearly 3,000 letters over forty years.

Mid-20th Century

Lee Highway (South Washington Street, Route 29) was constructed in the 1920's by the Lee Highway Association, an organization that attempted to build a cross-country highway named after Confederate General Robert E. Lee. The Town of Falls Church solicited the Lee Highway Association to construct the highway through the town in order to increase property values and to bring about commercial development.

The initial alignment of the road cut across several properties in the Tinner Hill neighborhood and nearly directly over top of Tinner Hill. In particular, the property of Dr. E. B. Henderson and Mary Ellen Henderson was divided by the new road, which led them to move their house north from its original location. Lee Highway was also widened to three lanes in the years between its initial construction in 1920 and 1938. Construction took more property and cut down trees within the new right-of-way. The road served to bring commercial development to the area, with land values increasing one hundred percent and property sales increasing



The original Lee Highway, constructed through the Town of Falls Church and neighboring jurisdictions from 1920 to 1938.



nearly one thousand percent as reported by real estate agents of the time.

Joseph Tinner died in 1928. Dr. E. B. Henderson continued his civil rights efforts, and in 1947 convinced the Washington Post to discontinue support of segregated sporting events. In 1936, Mary Ellen Henderson authored a study chronicling the disparity between black and white schools which helped lead to the construction of a new segregated school for African American students. Around 1941 the Virginia Village neighborhood was constructed. In 1960 Joseph Tinner's former home was destroyed with no written explanation according to a timeline produced by students at Virginia Tech in 2011. Also in 1960, Fairfax County Public Schools began integration.

Late 20th Century

The Tinner Hill neighborhood is part of what became known as the James Lee Conservation Area, which includes the Baptist Hill and Southgate Subdivisions in Fairfax County and Tinner Hill in both Fairfax County and the City of Falls Church. Streets and infrastructure in the Tinner Hill neighborhood became publicly owned in 1979. That year, a study was commissioned to investigate the conditions of public infrastructure in the area and to make recommendations for improvements that would meet city code standards. The study, titled, "The Falls Church/James Lee/Southgate Neighborhood Improvement Program and



(Above) An historic picture of the Henderson House.

(Below) Joseph Tinner's house circa 1920.



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Conservation Plan” recommended improvements including nine fire hydrants and fourteen streetlights, wider roads, gutters, and a cul-de-sac at the end of Tinner Hill Street. Construction on these improvements began in 1989 along Tinner Hill Street and Costner Drive.

The Henderson House was granted historic designation by the City in 1993, and in 1997 the Tinner Hill Heritage Foundation was founded. In 1999, the City of Falls Church City Council formally repealed the 1915 segregation ordinance that Joseph Tinner, E. B. Henderson, and others had fought against. That same year, the Tinner Hill Monument was constructed at the corner of South Washington Street and Tinner Hill Street using the distinctive pink granite of the former Tinner Quarry.

Early 21st Century

Redevelopment reached the South Washington Street Corridor in the first decade of the 21st century. Construction was completed on the Pearson Square/Tax Analyst project in 2007. It was the largest redevelopment project in the City and was constructed on the site of an old duckpin bowling alley. However, no further redevelopment has occurred in the area since then.

In 2008 a redevelopment proposal from the Falls Church Housing Corporation (FCHC) for a senior housing complex called “The Wilden” was approved by City Council. A later proposal from developer



Edwin Bancroft Henderson II, grandson of Dr. E.B. Henderson, and Jacqueline Tinner, granddaughter of Joseph Tinner, during the Tinner Hill Monument dedication ceremony, 1999. (Picture from Jet Magazine Oct. 25, 1999)



Bob Young would have supplemented The Wilden with an adjacent office building. However, neither project materialized due to financing issues, and by 2010 they were largely abandoned.

Present

The South Washington Street Corridor POA is currently composed of low-density auto-oriented development that includes large surface parking lots and a lack of pedestrian facilities. Because of this, the sites and monuments that represent the rich cultural heritage of the area are isolated. In addition, the Pearson Square/Tax Analysts property stands alone as the only mixed-use development in the area. However, another developer, Lincoln Properties, has since shown interest in redeveloping two properties at the western end of the area. In addition, the new Intermodal Transit Plaza is set for construction at the center of the South Washington Street Corridor POA. This has the potential to serve as a catalyst for redevelopment by providing bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvements as well as serving as a consolidated transit hub for the area.



An aerial photograph shows how the Pearson Square/Tax Analysts property stands isolated among low density commercial development and large surface parking lots.

Notable Residents

Several notable people that lived and owned land in or near the South Washington Street Corridor POA played an enormous roll in the history of Falls Church. Their legacies continue today in the form of Civil Rights freedoms, monuments, place names, and historic sites. Some of the families of these important people continue to live in the area and have active rolls in shaping the community.

Joseph B. Tinner

Though there is not much specific information available about the life of Joseph Tinner, his critical role in the fight for Civil Rights is known. Joseph and his brothers were skilled stonemasons who quarried pink granite from the stone near what would become known as Tinner Hill. The stone was used to construct buildings and decorative monuments, particularly arches, in the area. The foundations, fireplaces, and chimneys of many homes in the area built by the Tinners still remain, though most of the structures and monuments that they built were destroyed in the mid-20th Century.

Joseph Tinner was a devout Methodist who was known as a natural leader and excellent public speaker. When the segregation ordinance was passed in 1915, Joseph Tinner was elected as the leader of an organized group of residents opposed it. In 1918, he became the first president of the first



Joseph Tinner.



rural branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Minutes of the Town Council meetings that Joseph Tinner participated in are still available for review. He continued to be highly involved in the Civil Rights struggle until his death in 1928.

Dr. Edwin Bancroft & Mary Ellen Henderson

Dr. E. B. Henderson undertook an historic letter writing campaign from 1920 to 1960. During this time he wrote over 3,000 letters against racial discrimination to various

recipients. He also played a major role in fighting the segregation ordinance in 1915, in establishing the local NAACP branch, and introduced basketball to the area in 1904. His wife, Mary Ellen Henderson was a teacher in the segregated school system of



Mary Ellen Henderson.

the time and led a nine year fight to establish the first new local black school in the area. Both Dr. E. B. Henderson and Mary Ellen Henderson were involved in civil rights issues for over 50 years. Dr. Henderson was inaugurated into the National Black Athletes Hall of Fame in 1974, three years



Dr. Edwin Bancroft Henderson.

before his death. After an eight-year effort led by his grandson, Edwin B. Henderson II, and Edwin's wife, Nikki Graves Henderson, Dr. E. B. Henderson was inducted to Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame on September 8, 2013.

Edwin B. Henderson II lives in the same house as his grandparents Dr. E. B. and Mary Ellen and continues to play an active role in the community. In 1997, Edwin B. Henderson II founded the Tinner Hill Heritage Foundation to preserve African-American Civil Rights Era cultural heritage in the Tinner Hill neighborhood (See Chapter 3, Arts, Culture & Historic Preservation for more information on the Tinner Hill Heritage Foundation).

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James & Charles Lee

James and Charles Lee were born free in nearby Facquier County in 1840 and 1838, respectively. They went on to buy land near Tinner Hill in 1867, were prominent members of the community, and attended the nearby Second Baptist Church. Their land became the location of the Baptist Hill neighborhood in neighboring Fairfax County. Baptist Hill, Tinner Hill, and the nearby Southgate Subdivision have since become known as the James Lee community. The nearby James Lee Community Center, formerly the James Lee Elementary School, in Fairfax County, was built on land donated by Russell Lee, a relative of James Lee.

Harriet Brice

Harriet Brice was a free landowner in the area who contributed to the establishment of Galloway Methodist Church. She, along with Jacob Ross, Robert Gunnel, George Rumbles, and Sandy Parker assembled land for the original construction of the church in 1867. There is a parcel in the church graveyard for the Brice family. Land for a Parish House was later donated by a descendant of Harriet Brice, Mrs. Bertie Honesty.



Harriet Brice.
(Picture from gallowayunitedmethodistchurch.org)